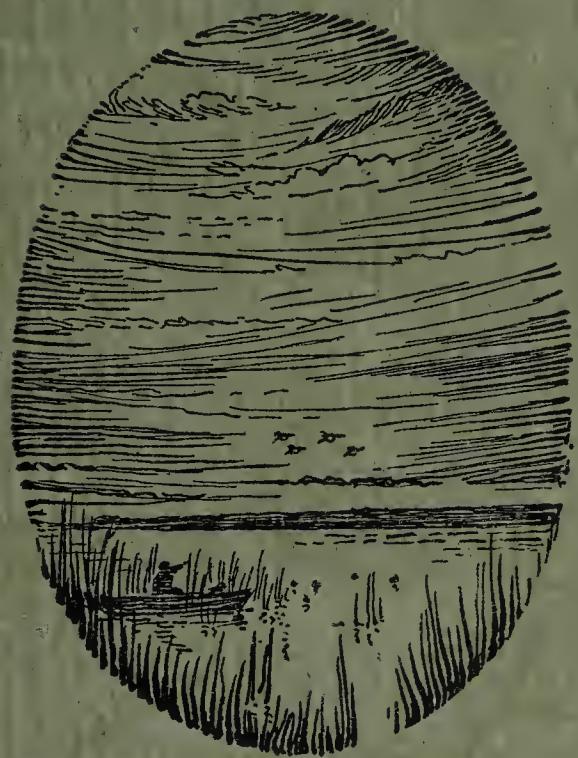


MORNING IN THE MARSH



BY

MARK G. McELHINNEY

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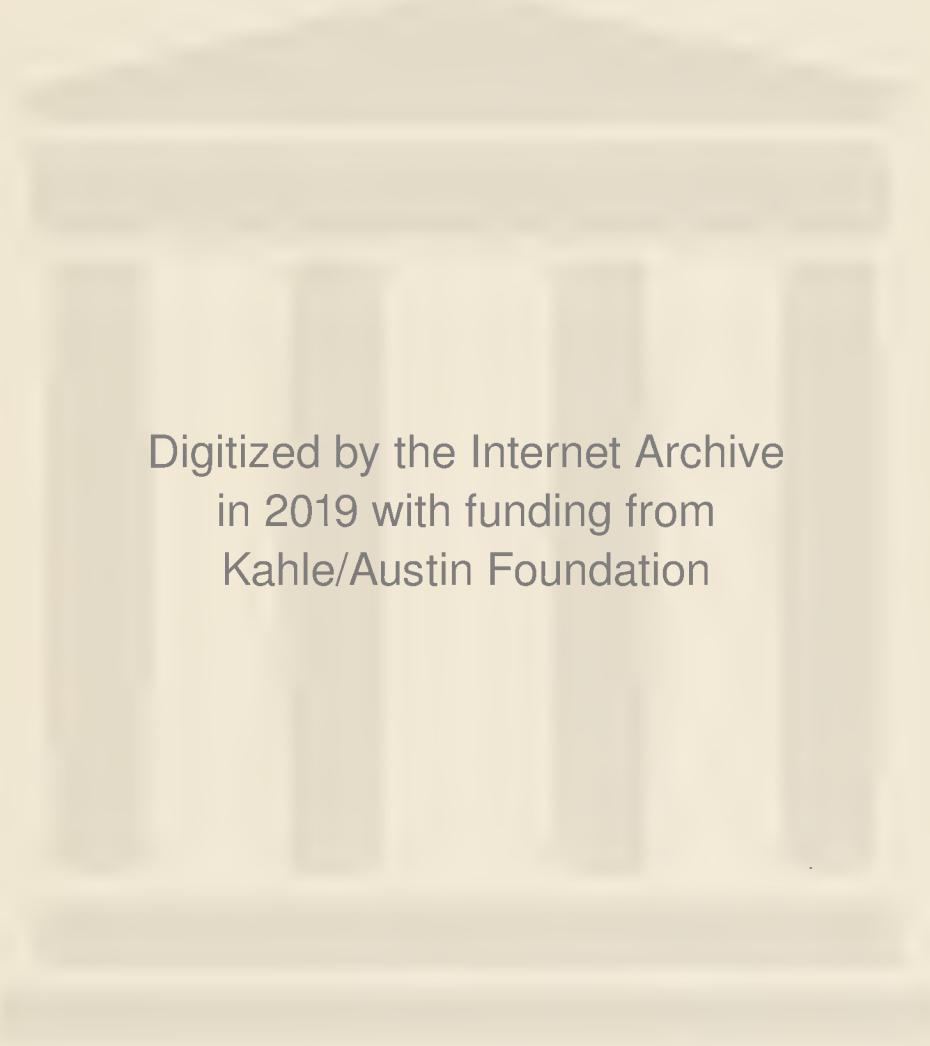


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MORNING
IN THE MARSH

The Thunder Bird



A Mark of Canadian Quality.

MORNING IN THE MARSH

*Poems for Lovers of the
Great Outdoors*



MARK G. McELHINNEY



THE GRAPHIC PUBLISHERS, LIMITED
OTTAWA, CANADA

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*Dedicated to my Son
who fell in France*

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MARK G. McELHINNEY

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Mark G. McEllinney

MORNING IN THE MARSH

Deep hidden in the marsh, while yet the veil
Of darkness hides the landscape from the eye,
I sit and wait for dawn, for then the ducks
Rise from their rest and to the open fly.

Just as the first faint streak of morning breaks
In misty twilight over field and flood,
As sinks to rest the owl and whip-poor-will,
Awakes to life the marshes myriad brood.

The laboring musquash paddles to his work
And squeaks "Good morning" to his brother rat,
Deep loaded with his rushes, swimming past,
He builds his cottage on the sunken flat.

The little rail with great ungainly feet
Runs o'er the lily-pads and stops to stare
At the intruder as I silent sit:
He wonders what I can be doing there.

A thousand bull-frogs chant a matin song,
A thousand blackbirds voice a loud refrain,
The hawks and herons and the bitterns too
Sound raucous notes above the watery plain.

The waking black-duck's quacking, clear and low,
Bids me take interest in his coming fate;
Anon the whistle of the wood-duck calls
Her morning greeting to her gay decked mate.

Morning in the Marsh

A million insects swarm the cool, still air,
The slugs across the leaves paint shining trails,
The ugly blacksnake writhes amongst the weeds
And birds seek hungrily their morning snails.

The spiders swing their dew-bejewelled webs
Across from rush to rush, the dragon flies
Chase the mosquitoes while their plainer friend,
The deer fly, on myself his pincers tries.

Across the hills the sweet September morn
Breaks into crimson glories that enfold
The world in colour like a fairy land
Of magic marshes in a land of gold.

The sky is ruddy like a dome of flame,
Each rush and leaf reflects the brilliant hue,
The water shimmers in the rosy light
That repaints gaily e'en the old canoe.

The whirring of the wild-duck's hurtling flight
Now draws the dreamer from the lesser joys
As pointing lakeward with his outstretched neck
He catches glimpses of my old decoys.

If then the subtle call is tuned aright
He hesitates and makes a hasty choice,
On turning as he checks his onward flight
On outstretched wings he makes a moment's poise.

Morning in the Marsh

The phycic moment—hand and eye are true,
Good iron and lead have done their best for me,
Loud-splashing falls the bird, a moment more
His mate can bear him goodly company.

So deeply is the savage stamped on man,
In spite of all the beauty he may see,
The sum of Nature's glories cannot reach
The keen, high joy he takes in butchery.

BLUENOSE BLOOD

From where Old Fundy's turgid tide roars, boiling up
the Bay,
To where Cape North keeps sentinel o'er the Atlantic
grey,
There is a breed of sailormen known to the Seven
Seas,
And Neptune is the ruling lord of their wide des-
tinies.
The North Atlantic is no place for pleasure's flannelled
guests.
Thick fogs and threat'ning, sullen clouds lower o'er
it's heaving crests,
That hold the menace of the berg and stress of grind-
ing ice,
'Twas here the Bluenose waged a war that knew no
armistice.
'Twas here the Bluenose learned his trade in fog and
freezing sleet;
Small wonder that he deemed the rest as dross beneath
his feet.

There is no sea that has not seen his bulging canvas
spread,
There is no sea that does not sleep some of his hallowed
dead.
From Baffin's Bay down to the Horn, from 'Frisco to
Brisbane,
He goes and comes in his day's work and some come
not again.
In the dread port of missing ships there lies a ghostly
fleet,

Morning in the Marsh

Sent there by fog or hurricane, by berg or driving
sleet.
Perchance, thin phantoms pace the decks and glory in
their past,
For what is death to Bluenose Blood that it should
stand aghast?
Stark Death must come to all alike, small matter
where or when,
So that they see their duty through and dying, die like
men.

THE MOTORBOAT PATROL

Time was when man in his hollowed log
Fared forth on his fearsome way
And littled dreamed that the Seven Seas
Would come beneath his sway.
Little he thought as he pushed it out
And paddled from key to key
That the hollowed log of his patient toil
Held the germ of his destiny.

From the hollowed log came the gay trireme
With its triple rowers chained
And the viking ship of the Norseman bold
With the wine of battle stained.
The stately ships that our fathers sailed
And held in high esteem
Till they timed their pulse to the steady beat
Of the measured tread of steam.

'Twas then they thought the end had come.
O'er-reaching was their pride,
From pole to pole and around the globe
The belching funnels plied.
Great ships that stretched a thousand feet,
That laughed at wind and wave
And made for all the time to come
The mighty sea a slave.

Morning in the Marsh

But the soul of the hollowed log kept on
Nor yet were its forces spent
For who can tell what the future holds
Or the tale of its whole content?
Puny and small was the motorboat,
So kin to its parent log
That the wise ones scoffed at its feeble ways
But it set the world agog.

To the snailing sail and the heavy steam
It has shown its spray-drenched heel
And held a speed that was never dreamed
By the men of the slow-borne keel.
It has shown the world that a little boat
Of scarce one hundred feet
Can hold her own in the snarling seas
With the staunchest of the fleet.

It has found its place in the grimdest game
That ever the nations played
And taken its trust with a cheerful will.
Staunch, swift and undismayed.
It has come to its own in its own good time
And woe to the foes who meet
This little son of the hollowed log,
The watchdog of the fleet.

STEAM

Sing I the chant of the god of the age,
Omnipotent steam engine—
Giant-limbed son of Fire and Water,
Tamer of the turbulent elements,
Carrier of Wealth and messenger of Knowledge,
Forerunner of the Age of Light'ning,
Victory of Man over Matter.

At the stir of one small lever
Moves the thousand-tonned leviathan
With a force resistless.

At the beck of man
Revolve the mighty wheels of commerce.
Free, most useless—Prisoned,
Cans't forge an anchor or a needle.
Invisible, hath conquered Nature,
Triumph of Art and Science.
Sing I the chant of a great invention.
Man makes to himself many gods
But thou art the greatest of all.

SUNSET ON THE RIDEAU

'Twas sunset—Rideau's bosom, calm
As molten silver, stretched afar
Beneath a sky whose faultless blue
Bore not a fleck its arch to mar,—
A moment, then a rising cloud
Along the vision-bounding line
The sinking sun's expiring rays
Flashed a celestial pantomime—
The cloud uprose, piled tower on tower
In battlemented glory, rowed
On arch and pinnacle and spire,
Gold tipped, the lower levels flowed
In darker reds and shades of grey
That naught but nature's master hand
E'er painted on the azure sky
Or magic mists of fairyland.
Short space it lived, the fading light
From ever changing brilliant tints
Repainted each in sombre grey
Like some old, storied priory.
The cloud-towers parted, rent in two
In gold the sun sank down from sight,
The vision, soul-entrancing dream,
Passed, mantled in the folds of night.

IN AUTUMN TIME

In autumn time the cattails turn a fuzzy, velvet brown,
The wild rice ripes to yellow and the fish are deeper down.

The base barrum of the bullfrog fills a chorus, loud
and strong;
The purple grackle hoarsely calls and the sparrow
chirps his song.

At night within some bosky dell a wise old owl calls out
With his eternal question, framed all grammar rules
to flout,

“To who? to who?” as if he held some favour to
bestow
Upon some protege of his down in the marsh below.

It seems that he must keep his gift, his generosity
Has never raised the answer yet “To me, to me, to
me”,

Some saucy little sparrow has a lawbook in his kit
And halts the whole proceedings with “To wit, to wit,
to wit”.

THOUGHTS AT LAKE LOUISE

When the Great Earth strained and bent and heaved
the mighty Rockies up,
There lay a little opal lake set in an amethystine
cup.
Around about, the mountains rise in their stupendous
majesty,
An amphitheatre of sorts for high Olympian tragedy.
In storm, the wild Valkyries ride and surge across the
swirling reek,
And one may hear the voice of Thor reverberate from
peak to peak.
As if to veil the super-theme from the base touch of
human eyes,
Black clouds enshroud the lofty tops that none may
read the mysteries.
Save when the vivid lightnings rive the masses of the
Stygian gloom,
We know that Jove has answered Thor with bolt for
bolt and doom for doom.
Then, all the demons of the storm round out the cosmic
panoplies
With every setting meet to stage the dialogue of
deities.
Small wonder man has made him gods to rule the
heights beyond his ken,

Morning in the Marsh

The mighty ones like Jove and Thor must have been
made by mountain-men,
Who saw the tumults of the storm through whirling
mists and driving reeks,
And fraught with superhuman souls the Armageddons
of the peaks.

THE MEADOW LARK

'Mongst all the little choristers
Of hill and plain and dale,
I love the little meadow lark
Who cheers the prairie trail.

Up from the sod where bluebells nod
And the blood lilies flame,
He seeks the nearest perch to trill
His welcoming acclaim.

He feign would burst his little throat
To tell his joy to me,
For life for him from dawn to dark
Seems one sweet ecstasy.

THE SONG OF STEAM

'Twas Kipling wished a man like Burns
To sing the Song of Steam,
To bring its hidden soul to light
And read the driver's dream
Down-sitting by the pile of steel
That hurls him through the seas
Without respect to wind or tide
O'er the immensities.

Well would it need a tongue like Burns'
To sing that song of might,
Well would it need an ear like Watt's
To hear that song aright,
For only he who knows the thing
From ashpan aft to screw
Can grasp its soul of unity
And read the meaning through.

By watch and watch through day and night
He sits upon his bench,
His censer is an oil-can
And his crucifix a wrench,
His priestly garb, a suit of jeans,
His prayer too oft a curse,
A form of speech, his heart is right
And many things are worse.

Morning in the Marsh

Down by the heart of things he sits
And with that heart communes,
Into his ear with pant and throb
It sings an hundred tunes.
An hundred tunes that tell the tale
Of its deep inmost soul
For every note is clear to him
As words upon a scroll.

He sees the coal down in its hell
Dance on the glowing grates,
He feels the steam in anger press
Its tons upon the plates,
And coursing through the main pipe reach
The valves that curb its flow
And set it to a measured time
As slaves are wont to go.

He sees it fill the cylinders
And cutting off, expand
Until the pistons make their stroke
Then at the valve's command,
A demon taming down until
It passes from the low
Along the great condenser pipe
A trickling, inert flow.

From hissing rage that well might burst
The plates that hold its power
It trickles down into the well,

Morning in the Marsh

A spent and harmless shower
With scarce the heat to cook an egg
Or spin a schoolboy's top,
A tribute to the prentice, man,
In God's eternal shop.

Where are the mighty kings of old
Who tamed the savage lands,
The fabled works of Hercules,
The thaumaturgic hands
Of priests and prophets and of gods;
Their claims but paltry seem
Alongside of the mighty works
That man has done with Steam.

For Steam is of the here and now,
It needs no special stage,
It does its work beneath the sun
And scorns the fabled page
Of magic scroll, of quaint caprice
Of any nation's god
But girds the land and stems the seas
And cleaves the stubborn sod.

Each in its place from grate to flue
Must do its bidden work,
Each in its place from valve to screw
No bidden duty shirk.
From oiler nut that weighs an ounce
To shaft that weighs a ton

Morning in the Marsh

There is no social scale observed
For each and all are one.

One thought, one duty and one goal,
None better and none worse;
A type in iron and brass and steel
Of this great universe.

A type the hand of man has wrought
In one harmonious whole
To teach the creed of Unity
Of the Eternal Soul.

THE OLD CANOE

Plain it is your day is past,
 Old Canoe!
Clutched by common fate at last,
 Old Canoe.
Once I thought your ribs of oak
Counted Time a sorry joke
Played on none but human folk—
 Old Canoe.

There you lie in silent state,
 Old Canoe;
Aged, rotted, out of date,
 Old Canoe!
Gone are rudder, sails and spars,
Gone are bottom-boards and bars,
Old paint shows through many scars,
 Old Canoe.

You have sailed on summer seas,
 Old Canoe;
Wafted by a gentle breeze,
 Old Canoe!
You have breasted wave and gale
Shorn of every stitch of sail,
You have seen a man turn pale,
 Old Canoe.

Morning in the Marsh

Were there tongues in copper nails,
 Old Canoe,—
You could tell some pretty tales,
 Old Canoe!
You have heard the rifle crack,
You have borne the booty back,
You have seen some wear and rack,
 Old Canoe.

Once you had a golden age,
 Old Canoe.
Do you still recall that page,
 Old Canoe?
And that time so sweet and brief
E'er there came the pall of grief—
Man is fateful sorrow's fief,
 Old Canoe!

You have left a glist'ning wake,—
 Old Canoe!
In the moonlight on the lake,
 Old Canoe.
Then you carried precious freight—
Gold not more so weight for weight—
Say! do you believe in fate,
 Old Canoe?

In the happy hunting ground,
 Old Canoe,

Morning in the Marsh

I shall launch you with a bound,
 Old Canoe!
Down the moonlight on the river
You and I and she together
Shall sail on and on forever,
 Old Canoe.

SAILING ON THE LAKE

O'er the sparkling lake
Like a seagull free
My way I take.

Away o'er the billowy crested waves
As the parted water the gunwale laves,
Now a dash in the trough,
Now a spatter of spray
As the surges roll away, away—
Ahead, a billow's white-capped comb,
Astern, a bubbling track of foam.

'Tis the sport of the Free,
'Tis the joy of the true
To fly in the white-winged sailing canoe
While the eye is alert to the veering wind
And the buoyant craft like a being of mind
Obeys the helm
And dodges the seas
And careens to the breeze.

The spars may bend and the tackle strain,
'Tis the sweetest of music, a glad refrain,
Sweet scene to the eye, a balm to the brain.
A wild exultation the being fills
As the breezes sweep from the verdant hills
Bearing the scent of the flowers in their train

Morning in the Marsh

As with wings of snow
O'er the sparkling lake
Like a seagull free
My way I take.

DOWN WIND

"A wet sheet and a flowing sea and a wind that follows fast"

Sounds mighty well 'round a blazing grate, snug-harbored from the blast,

But, have you tended sheets and steered and watched the straining stick,

And wished to God preventer stays were fitted double-thick?

"Before the gale" makes pretty prints to hang around a room,

I'd sooner buck the seas close-hauled than dodge a gybing boom,

I'd rather take the drenching slop and leave some cares behind

For many things can happen when she's romping down the wind.

VALE! VALE!

To my friend H. McD. Walters.

Above, the sky is blue and cold
Full of chill winds that weave and moan
Through the stripped trees, the sodden earth
Is littered with dead leaves that late
Decked them in Autumn's gaudy garb.
The birds that cheered us through the days
Of summer suns are gone to seek
A clime more kindly where the skies
Know not the menace of shrill winter winds.

Man, of eternal change, the pawn.
Seeks answer: Whence, Why and Where?
The cold, blue sky is dumb, no word
Falls from its bowl impenetrable.
Orphan of the Universe, he seeks,
Garners the little good that comes his way,
Then, when his winter comes, he falls
And lays him with the littered leaves
Blent with the low earth that bore him.

Still, 'tis something to have lived and loved,
And worked and thought and eased mayhap
The heavier load of the less fortunate
In gifts of song and tale and rhyme,
To move to laughter or to tears

Morning in the Marsh

With the deep riches of a kindly heart
That felt for those who suffered.

He who is gone was rich in human good,
Tuned to the harmonies that reach and grip
His fellowmen. He has no lack of friends
Whose tears will mingle in the silent night
And cherish memories while memory holds.

We, who are stricken, know the leaden pain
That follows loss. We know the sad, long nights,
The empty days that fight like demons
With the Will to Live.

We feel, we know, but mostly we are dumb
And flaunt the flag of courage, it is best
For who would cast the shadow of defeat
Upon the hopes of Youth? The years are theirs
And we can moult our sorrows as we pass.

MY BARK CANOE

Gently glide my bark canoe,
O'er the dancing waters glide
Floating lightly o'er the blue
Restless bosom of the tide.
Like the sun-lit glinting lake,
Lifetime has its ebbs and flows,
From its tempest-tortured birth
To its death in sweet repose.
Would that all its strange ferment
Brought with each a healing balm
As the noisy winds of day
Rest in evening's moonlit calm.
Would that all the countless storms
That the wandering spirit press
Vanished like the rushing wave
Into calm forgetfulness.

A SUMMER IDYLL

A wheelman went a-wheeling
When the summer sun was low,
When the merry birds had sought their nests;
Where did the wheelman go?
He went to see the fair Daphne.

The wheelman went a-walking
When the summer sun had set;
Sly Cupid shoots when the birds are mute,
He'll have that wheelman yet
Down at the feet of Daphne sweet.

The wheelman wheeled him homeward
When the summer moon was high,
What sweet delight was in his soul
And why did Daphne sigh?
Sly Cupid's dart had pierced her heart.

Two wheelers went a-wheeling
On the cycle swift of time,
Daphne has made the wheelman glad,
Ring out the merry chime
In blessing free on fair Daphne.

THE MAN FROM GASPERAUX

The wind came roaring up the Bay
And lashed the rips to foam
And made the little fishing boats
Skedaddle straight for home.

Soon, all were safe from wind and wave,
Snug-harbored in the creek
Save one, a little schooner that
Was bound for Port au Pique.

Next day, the circuit-preacher told
The old, sad tale of woe;
How, "She did drown six precious souls
And a man from Gaspereaux."

VICTORY

Racetime at Jamaica Bay,
Water sparkling in the sun,
Boats with sputtering exhausts
Waiting for the starter's gun.

Bang! they're off like whippets keen,
Flashing o'er the stinging brine,
Jockeying a vantage place
From the very starting line.

Flying spray and flashing sun,
Water, oil and carbon black
Streak the faces of the men
Sent to bring the trophy back.

Stem by stem and gunwales close,
Scarce a handbreath is to spare,
Brain and hand co-ordinate
Or the sea will get its share.

Flying spray and splashing grime,
Failure if the motor skips,
Failure if one stalls or fouls,
Dry tongues licking salty lips.

Mile on mile of stinging spray,
Mile on mile of deaf'ning roar,
Blind to all except the course
And the boat that is before.

Morning in the Marsh

Mile on mile, when will it end?
Hot, hard test of man and boat
When the smallest error means
Neither will be long afloat.

Flying spray and boiling wake,
Hairpin turns, the staggered swells
Surge about the bobbing stakes
Like a dozen little hells.

Comes a time the dropping flag
Signals the last lap is on
And the staunch Canadian crew
Wakes to find the trophy won.

Fleecy clouds and circling gulls,
Water sparkling in the light,
Racetime at Jamaica Bay
And our Laurie Brown's all right.

DAINTY MAID!

Dainty maid with eyes so merry,
Cheeks like roses, lips like cherry,
Little point of shoe out-peeping
From beneath the skirt's safekeeping—
Now so shy and now so daring
Craftily my heart ensnaring,
Driving me to willy nilly
Make myself look very silly
Just to measure the ellipse
Of those roguish, pouting lips

ROSES

Climbing o'er the garden wall
Bent on stealing roses,
Do we heed the vagrant thorn
Which our quest opposes?
Who would grudge the trivial price
Of the sweet possession
When the stolen rose at last
Pardons the transgression?

IN ARCADIE

In Arcadie the roads are smooth that pass amongst
the hills,

The skies are clear and one can hear the music of the
rills.

In Arcadie, there are no storms; warm suns and cooling
showers

Fall on the trees and velvet slopes that lie about its
bowers.

In Arcadie, the stars peep out and whip-poor-wills
entune

Through the warm mists of evening and it is always
June.

In Arcadie there is a tryst deep in a sylvan dell
And more than that nor moons nor stars nor purling
brooklets tell.

In Arcadie, but where is this domain of ecstasy?
In every land; all lovers claim they've been in Arcadie.

THE SNOWFLAKES

Out of the shrouded, storm-wrought sky
Two little snowflakes, passing by,
Fell on the windowsill.

Out of the millions, who can know,
Who can tell how the winds may blow
Onto the windowsill?

From somewhere blew a warmer air,
Melted to one the snowflakes there
Out on the windowsill.

After a while the sun came out
And that frail droplet blotted out,
Gone from the windowsill.

Life is the shrouded, storm-wrought sky;
Love, two snowflakes, passing by,
Meet on the windowsill.

Time, that sets the fate of men,
Cares not who, nor how, nor when,
Out on the windowsill.

Just for a moment two are one
And in a moment all is gone,
Gone from the windowsill.

A MEMORY

Moonlight in June, under the new-leaved trees
Stirred by the gentle air, a small, white tent;
Below, the silver-ribboned river flows,
Through sheen and shadow, wonderfully blent.

Cedar and birch, wild cherry and tall pine
Distil a faint, sweet fragrance, breath of Spring
Deep-laden with the essence of Desire
That thrills the soul of every living thing.

So sweet the hour no tongue of man can tell
And silent is the vigil of the moon;
A small, white tent beside the silver stream,
A misty-moonlit evening in June.

THE LITTLE PEOPLE

When the moonbeams, soft and misty,
Filter through the forest aisle,
Then the Little People gather
For their evening dance the while.

Lords and ladies, lance and pennant,
Harlequins and sober seers,
Peasant folk with wife and babies,
Every walk of life appears.

True it is, these Little People,
Last year's milkweed pods may seem,
But true lovers always see them
As the fairies of their dream.

MY TEMPLE

Deep in the forest fastness,
Out on the rocky steep,
Nought but the song of the wild-bird,
Nought but the squirrel's cheep
Save the sough of the wind in the branches
And the lapping wave on the shore
All blending into the music
Of the distant rapids roar.

Morning over the waters
Greets the blue arch of the skies;
Dragon flies skim o'er the river,
Lazy bass rise at the flies,
Beavers laboring ever
Toil at the growing dam,
Giant pines on the ridges
Burden the air with their balm.

Cool in a leafy shadow,
Soft on a mossy slope
With the forest glade for a temple
And a mighty pine for a pope
The songs of the birds are my hymnal
And the rapids an organ grand
With a chipmunk to preach a sermon,
A sermon I understand.

TOBACCO

Peace-giving herb of the Occident,
Air-castled home of a sprite,
Who woos one to sleep in the daytime
And robs one of slumber at night;
Fain would I bless that man Raleigh
Who brought thy soft sweetness to light,
Dull care is dissolved in thy vapors
That waft perfumed dreams of delight—
But one little item, Sir Walter,
Had 'most made me call thee a churl
On the day that I smoke, well, I must not
Kiss the cherry-red lips of my girl.

THE SONG

Behold the wise, foregathered 'round the board,
Replete from soup to nuts, a vict'ry scored
'Gainst one of the Apocalyptic Four,
Continued thus, the others were no more.
To-night may run the subject of the talk
From Thanatopsis down to Jabberwock;
As each confesses to his fav'rite rhyme
In wit or rhythm or in thought sublime.

Now I, partaker of this double feast
Am at a loss to tell or at the least
To choose a fav'rite down the endless line
From Saga to Old Omar of the Wine
Or from the Persian Bard to modern times
So many are the soul-compelling rhymes.
Thus am I tempted, I could do no worse,
To tell of my tale in my own halting verse.

To tell the truth, my caprice to excuse,
Full early was I wedded to the Muse
And if I later wedded other wife
Send me not down for bigamy for life.
I take it there may be a lawyer here
Who'll take my case, not at a rate too dear,
Examine it and prove an alibi;
(Impossible, with H.C.L. so high.)

Morning in the Marsh

In early youth I loved heroic verse
That stirred the blood, and read the Universe
In terms of chivalry and daring view;
(With this, my sailor forbears had to do.)
When adolescence claimed a later age
Sweet sentiment I sought and not the sage
Who later came to temper youthful fire
And put the brake of reason on desire.

My early reading was a harmless vice
Pursued as some pursue the cards and dice
For killing time and giving satisfaction
For living seems to need continual action.
'Twas later that I learned Life needs a goal
And futile action only fools the soul.
'Twas then I learned, Man has no time to kill;
That he must choose his purpose, Hell or Will.

Blind drifting, purposeless, all may seem well
Until the drifter wakens up in Hell.
Awakened to a purpose, born, his Will,
Mankind may triumph over every ill
And Poetry, the music of the Soul
Can help him to the vantage of his Goal.
Some may in Music seek their ecstasy;
And find in chords, in rhythm is to me.

What is my fav'rite poem, can you ask
One 'neath the snows of winter? What a task!
The long review of joy, of rhyme and wit,

Of keenest thought in subtle wording knit.
When Juvenal in caustic language penned
His satires, think you that he saw the end?
The Jabberwock to dollards is but dirt;
And Midas trembles at "Song of the Shirt."

Some fool has written, he would sooner rate
Bard to the nation than to legislate.
In view of recent times, our worldly plight,
Fool or no fool, the blessed fool was right.
Great guns may bark across the Seven Seas
And, gun for gun, the soul of Mars appease.
Behind our guns there were the British Bards,
Before them, nothing lies today but shards.

Trenchant, the Brush, the Lute, the Law, the Sword
But greater still the call of rhyming word.
The simple rhymes learned at the mother's knee
Are oft foundations for the man to be;
Through Life's sad tragedy, its ebb and flow,
The childish rhymes remain, the last to go.
The motif of a nation, bond or free
Breathes joy and sorrows in its poetry.

Man is a paradox, a child o'ergrown;
Full often has a song upset a throne.
"Sold for a Song" was uttered by a dolt;
For oft in Song is hid the thunderbolt
That swells and bursts until the Nation's soul

Morning in the Marsh

Is bent upon achievement of its goal.
Kings may in pageantry their parts rehearse
While Dante and Milton make a Universe.

Rome, Calvin, Hume, held Scotland in their turns
But where's the Scot who's lost his faith in Burns?
Prelates and kings may totter to their fall
Without a jar to Shakespeare's pedestal.
Slaves of world-myths may tax their streaming eyes,
Meanwhile, Old Omar's laughter rends the skies
And the wise fool who prates of ill or well
Fades like the tinkle of the camel bell.

The drama of the poet nothing lacks,
Above the law, no tool of slavish facts
He weaves his fantasy to suit his mood
Beyond the snarling of the slave-born brood.
For him, no brick nor mortar holds a part,
His realm, the kinship of the human heart
Where, safe from beating of the distant drum
He moulds the spirit of the time to come.

Man is a child and hoping, nothing worse,
A foundling orphan of the Universe;
Born, willy nilly, here a little span,
Dead, willy nilly, ere he scents the plan
That sent him to this little orb as such
What wonder that the question plagues him much?
Childlike, he questions, Whither, Why and Whence?
And childlike, failing answer, he invents.

Around the smallest atom of the Whole
He builds him myths to satisfy his soul,
Itself a myth but cogent to his thought
Which needs a centre for his little plot.
Around this centre with his bit of string
He draws concentric circles, ring on ring,
Still hoping, striving, that if Time permit,
The outer will surround the infinite.

'Tis futile, for 'tis plain no circle will
Place bounds on that which is far greater still.
One boon, one only, has the iron law
Of Nature given to Man on which to draw
For compensation in his futile quest,
Imagination, and he does the rest.
In Art and Song his argosies return;
Happy, he dies, his sorrows in the Urn.

And here I cease, not answering the question
And hoping I have caused no indigestion.
I love all poetry that feeds the heart
And give to each of us in life, a part.
E'en if our treasured argosies are naught
It's something to have lived and loved and wrought.
E'en if our deep philosophies are wrong,
T'is something to have lived, and heard the Song.

WHITHER BOUND?

Down the trail of the rising moon,
Weird as a south sea piccaroon,
Soaring seaward silently.

Silver boat on a silver sea,
Is it war or love or fee—
Whither bound so stealthily?

Down the gentle zephyr borne
Comes not from a heart forlorn
Tinkling laughter merrily.

Naught it hints at pelf or war,
Silvery thrill that flew afar,
'Twas a love-note verily.

Now we know thy haven true,
Cupid rates amongst the crew
Doing duty manfully.

Man and maid beneath the moon,
'Twixt a kiss and maccaroon,
Plighting love eternally.

DOROTHY RHYMES—I

THE POINT OF VIEW

Gloomy Gus and Sunny Jim
Went for a walk together
And it chanced to be their whim
To discuss the weather.

'Twas a bonny summer day,
Cloud and sunshine chasing,
With a shower and then a shine
And the air was bracing.

"I allow" growls Gloomy Gus
"One day with another,
Rain and wind and clouds and things
Life's a horrid bother."

"'Pears to me" chirps Sunny Jim
'Taint no use repining,
Take it mostly, by and large
And the sun is shining."

Gloomy Gus and Sunny Jim,
(Wonder if they knew it;)
Each saw what was inside him,—
That's all there is to it.

THE LITTLE CAVEMAN, THE BEAR AND THE TRILOBITE

Nearly a million of years ago
Before the ages of ice and snow
A little caveman sat picking his fill
From the wing of a tender young pterodactyl.

The meat was so sweet for the bird was fat,
(We call it a bird but it looked like a bat)
That the little caveman didn't notice a bear
Come crawling right out of his nearby lair.

Nearer and nearer the cave-bear came
With his tusklike teeth and his eyes of flame,
Figuring out a most excellent dinner
On our little antidiluvian sinner.

There's many a slip twixt the cup and the lip;
It chanced that a trilobite out for a trip
(Twas a very small trilobite, goodness knows)
But it blew right into the cave-bear's nose.

The cave-bear frowned and the cave-bear winked
And his eyes ran big, salt tears till he blinked
For who in the world could his features compose
With a ten-legged tickler up in his nose.

Morning in the Marsh

With a strain and a snort and a grunt and a wheeze
His bearship broke forth in a jolly good sneeze;
The little caveman took alarm at the sound
And picked up his dolomite club with a bound.

With a swing round his head through the whistling air
He brought it down smack on the nose of the bear
And then for a week each day ate his fill
Of bear-steak along with his pterodactyl.

Now, this little tale which I've tried to relate
Shows the marvellous working of intricate fate;
If the trilobite small hadn't rattled that bear
Perhaps some of you gentlemen wouldn't be here.

DOROTHY RHYMES—II

HOW MR. BLUE JAY SAVED MR. BUNNY FROM THE FOX

The beautiful summer had just begun,
Mr. Bunny was sitting around in the sun
A'wagging his ears in the warm June breeze
And carefully washing his whiskerees.

Sly Mr. Fox, the wicked old sinner,
Was looking about for a nice little dinner;
He spied Mr. Bunny up there in the sun
And said to himself "There's my caraway bun."

He crept by each tree and each hummocky mound,
So careful to make not the least bit of sound
To catch Mr. Bunny before he could run,
And make a sure thing of his caraway bun.

A Blue Jay was sitting near by in a tree
And saw Mr. Fox and his dinner to be;
He liked Mr. Bunny up there in the sun
For bunnies and blue jays are both full of fun.

He thought up a joke in his wise little craw
About Mr. Fox's old mother-in-law

Morning in the Marsh

And cracked it so pat, the wily old gaff
Mr. Fox was so tickled he started to laugh.

Mr. Bunny was startled and made a great bound
And soon was quite snug in his home underground;
So, thanks to the kindness of good Mr. Jay,
Mr. Fox didn't get him for dinner that day.

FATHER TIME

Old Father Time must be getting pretty grey
Yet his vigour has not suffered in the least,
He tackles every contract in the good old-fashioned
way

That he used when he first came from the East.

You must know Father Time started out to wear and
tear

On the Oriental nations long ago;
He finished them up neatly and then had strength to
spare

To bury them deep in the earth below.

His peculiar ways of working are a terror to the Earth,
He is never in a hurry in the chase,
It is no concern of his what the victim may be worth
Or its estimated value to the race.

He can tumble, he can bleach everything within his
reach

Whether wood or stone or palpitating flesh;
He can to pride and arrogance a useful lesson teach,
All existence must be sifted through his mesh.

With the forces of construction he will ever be at war,
He must triumph over every living soul,
'Tis the fresh and new and strange that he ever does
abhor

For an infinite dead level is his goal.

Egypt, Babylon and Greece heard his heavy footstep
fall

And beneath it tumbled into dust;
Over Turkey, Spain and Italy he hovers like a pall,
E'en the crown of haughty Britain shall be rust.

Old Father Time must be getting pretty grey
Yet his vigour shall not suffer in the least,
He will tackle every contract in his grim old-fashioned
way
Till himself and space and being shall have ceased.

ONTARIO DRINKING SONG

What Ho for the plop of the ginger pop
And the fizz of the ginger ale;
The cooling draught of the lemonade
And the sparkling cider, pale.
Come fill me up a brimming cup
Of the grape-juice, ruby red
To drink the breezy Bryan's health;
King Alcohol is dead.

Free, let the soda fountain flow,
Around, its flavours pass
Till every mother's son is full
Of chocolate and gas.
Long live the brew of marble dust
And acid sulph. for they
Are ours to have and hold, that is,
We hold them while we may.

Lap up the futile two per cent
But treat it carefully
For forty gallons, more or less
Might constitute a spree.
Do not forget the iron brew
And coca cola brown
And orangeade of party shade
When painting up the town.

Morning in the Marsh

What Ho! Hela! Viva! Hurrah!
Come join our jamboree,
The curfew rings at nine o'clock
And ends our revelry.

A RIOT ON PARNASSUS

What Ho! this roll of drum and blare of brasses,
A riot on the slopes of old Parnassus,
So, seize a horn, my friend, and loudly blow it
Proclaiming your own pet Canadian poet.

Lampman, Scott, Carmen, Roberts, Campbell,
Each has his champion in the wordy scramble
And others far too numerous to mention
Are being added to the main contention.

Why not compile a list of every rhymer
And give us all a chance, a deal sublimer
Than keeping for the few the adulation
Belonging to all poets in the nation?

If you'd ask me, who is the greatest poet?
My modesty forbids an answer to it,
But, just to satisfy the artful dodgers,
I say, it lies twixt me and Gordon Rogers.

THIS EVIL WORLD

My godly heart is full of shame
When wickedness my soul provokes,
I built a fire the other day
And found out that it sometimes smokes.

One night I saw an awful sight
That filled my holy soul with pain,
In spite of Ben and O.T.A.
The wicked moon was full again.

And here is where the curse of sin
Upreaches to unearthly heights,
Not long ago in the canal,
Two ten-year kiddies minus tights.

I scarce can tell it, I'm so shocked,
Two robins and no marriage bell,
Nor priest nor book, it should be stopped
Ere this old world is plunged in hell.

MY BED

I've made my bed most everywhere
From chateau grand to wayside tree,
So doggoned tired I did not care
So long as no one bothered me.

The net-board of a fishing smack
Upon the tide-torn Cobequid,
Under a tarp to shed the rain,
So tired we cared not what it did.

A freighter and a bin of spuds
That seemed the only answer there;
They left their imprints through my duds,
I was so tired I did not care.

Across the prairie, night on night,
Beneath the vigil of the stars,
And I can speak right recondite
Of sleeping stunts in motorcars.

Moored to a stump was my canoe
Somewhere amongst the Rideau Lakes;
I felt the chill September dew
That gets one just as morning breaks.

But, best of all, a little ship
At anchor in a sheltered neck
To lie at ease and hear the rain
Come patterning upon the deck.

SACRIFICE

Rising moon and sailing clouds
Stars set deeply in the blue
I have loved you much, she said,
And the cost I do not rue.
I have loved you much, and more
I shall love you 'till the last,
Even though the decalogue
Guard the gate through which we passed.
Love was here before the law
Of the lower sort was penned,
Still must be the higher law
That no other laws transcend.
Risen moon, the nearer stars
Pale beneath the greater light;
Ever is the woman's love
Sacred, be it wrong or right.

ADVENTURE

Last night I heard the pipes of Pan
Across a clearing, plan-a-plan.
But when I came around the oak
Agone were all the merry folk.
Sat I down on a mossy spot
And thought and thought and thought and
thought
Until I sat, a little thing,
A mushroom in a fairy ring.
Then came around the shady oak
The dancing band of little folk.
I sat around as I might well
Drinking wine from a violet's bell.
I heard the pipes and saw the clan
And also I saw Peter Pan.
They danced until the morning broke
Then vanished quickly 'neath the oak.
And I, grown back to normal size,
Went home to breakfast, wondrous wise.

"CANADA"

Set on a far-flung land, stretching from ocean to ocean;
Ten wide strides of the sun, each great enough for a nation;
South from the Pole, half over the breast of the world;
Greater than gilded the dreams of Alexander or Cæsar.
Full of the riches of earth: gold, man is willing to strive for;
Iron for peace and for war, coal, silver and copper,
Timber for housing and ships and square leagues of paper
For wrapping of goods and of thoughts for ages uncounted.
Lakes and rivers and seas, teeming with spoils for the fisher;
Thousands of miles of coasts, indented with harbors;
Millions of acres for planting, saluting the tiller;
Life, joy and food for an hundred millions of workers.
Was ever such heritage vouchsafed and sealed to a people?

Who are the people upon whom so kingly a dower
Is lavished unstinted, the price but the holding and using,
With honor and labour in trust for the nation arising?

These are the men of the Land with the Stake of the Ages;

Charged with the making of history for half a continent.

Sprung from the loins of virile and Northern Europe,
Blent of the blood of the Viking, the Angle and Saxon,
Tinged with the fire of the Frank, the Celtic and unyielding Scot,

With brain, brawn and will for the task of the future:
Out of Time's crucible turning a breed that is yet to be conquered.

The eyes of the questioning world are upon us.

Loud echoes the void with the challenge, we could not do other;

Where great things are given, there must great things be expected.

With Might must come Right, with Power must come Justice,

Turning our backs upon self and the fleshpots of Egypt;
Forgetful of creed and of Race and the poison of Faction,

Welding the links of a happy and powerful nation;
Canada, free and triumphant, a world-hope accomplished.

A NOTE ON THE TYPE IN
WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

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